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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CHISINAU 000786

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STATE FOR EUR/UMB

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [ECON](#) [OSCE](#) [MD](#)
SUBJECT: 3-PLUS-2 MEETING GIVES IMPULSE TO
CONFIDENCE BUILDING BUT STATUS TALKS REMAIN
STALLED

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Rudolf V. Perina
for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The July 21-23 meeting of observers and mediators to the 5-plus-2 process (known as the 3-plus-2) was successful in giving greater impulse to the working groups. The US, EU, OSCE, and to a lesser extent Ukraine reps repeatedly stressed the need for starting work on the political issues in parallel with progress in confidence-building measures, and spoke in favor of the Moldovan package of documents as a good starting point for such talks. The Russian negotiator, Nesterushkin talked around the issue, but did not either support or reject the package. No concrete decisions were taken on how to get the document onto the table and start formal 5+2 negotiations on status.

¶2. (C) On next steps, the OSCE proposed holding a seminar to begin discussions of the status issue in a non-binding format, which HOM Remler suggested could help encourage Transnistrian participation. The working groups will continue to meet with greater attention for the OSCE mission and 3+2 to encourage progress. There was discussion of following up with letters to Presidents Voronin and Smirnov urging progress on two areas: (1) pushing for removal of a certain number of monitoring posts and (2) urging reopening of the Gura Bicului Bridge (repaired by EU at a cost of Euro 2 Million and necessary for MCC road work). CIO Talvite proposed the idea of holding a 3-plus-2 in early September in preparation for a 5-plus-2 in late September. End Summary.

¶3. (C) On July 21 the 3+2 had an opening lunch meeting of the principals of the 3+2 and an evening reception that which included officials from Moldova and Transnistria. The 3-plus-2 delegations met on July 22 with President Voronin in Chisinau, with Transnistrian Vice-President Koroliev in Tiraspol (the meeting was scheduled for the 3+2 to meet with TN leader Smirnov who stated illness as the reason for not meeting), and held a joint session in Tiraspol with heads of the working groups from both sides. On July 23 delegations from the 5-plus-2 held a four-hour off-shore working meeting aboard a boat in the Dniester. The heads of delegations were: Heike Talvite (OSCE CIO), Philip Remler (OSCE Mission to Moldova), DAS David Merkel (USG), Kalman Miszei (EU), Valerii Nesterushkin (Russia), Deputy Foreign Minister Gorin (Ukraine), Minister for Reintegration Sova (Moldova), and Acting

Foreign Minister Yastrebchak (Transnistria).

President Voronin Says Conditions Favor
Settlement

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¶4. (C) President Voronin noted favorable conditions for solving the conflict and stressed his desire to see a resolution in time to carry out the 2009 elections with Transnistria included. If so, Transnistria would have representatives in the central government. Voronin expressed Moldova's readiness for negotiations on the status package, and expressed his commitment to peaceful reunification with Moldova's citizens on the other bank, pledging no use of force. Voronin said that Moldova would draft an assessment of the costs of reintegration, and hoped to attract international donor funds to assist.

¶5. (C) The Moldovan president posed three questions for group discussion -- (1) In whose name would the political package be put on the table?; (2) When would formal 5-plus-2 talks be resumed?; and (3) What steps should Moldova take to encourage active Transnistrian participation? The EU, USG, Ukraine and OSCE all openly supported the package as a good starting point for the 5-plus-2 settlement negotiations, while Russian negotiator Nesterushkin made vague

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statements that avoided any direct commentary on the package.

¶6. (C) Remler proposed holding a seminar that would allow a more academic discussion of status concepts while not representing actual negotiations on status. He suggested that Transnistria might be more open to discussions of status options in a seminar, and thus this format could open the door to political talks.

Smirnov Unavailable, Vice President Koroliev
Meets Group

¶7. (C) Though Smirnov had initially agreed to meet with the 3-plus-2 group and confirmed the scheduled time, the Transnistrian side later informed that their "president" was not available as he was recuperating, though there were some allegations Smirnov was actually in town and other suggestions he was on vacation in the Crimea. The 3+2 instead met with "Vice President" Koroliev. Despite Koroliev's reputation as a hard-liner, he remained calm and focused during the meeting, and did not deliver Smirnov's usual ideological monologue.

¶8. (C) Koroliev questioned the need for negotiating new documents when negotiations had already gone on for years, with dozens of agreements already signed but not being implemented. Koroliev suggested making a study of who was responsible for the previous collapse of talks. He complained about Moldova's economic blockade on Transnistria, and the ban on TN leadership traveling to EU countries. Koroliev advocated solving practical problems such as railway issues, and expressed the belief that confidence-building measures could build the trust needed for success at the negotiating

table.

¶9. (C) Observers and mediators offered their positions. Kalman Miszei noted that the international 3-plus-2 component would help ensure that any new agreement reached would not be sidelined. He suggested that old agreements could still be of use to the working groups as a basis for moving forward. He urged Koroliev to trust international cooperation in the 5-plus-2 format and underlined that the EU was ready to help finance projects to move the process forward. Miszei said that allowing free movement of people and goods would show good faith, and urged the linkage between confidence-building measures and political talks.

¶10. (C) DAS Merkel said that rather than focus on the past and who was to blame, it was important to focus constructively on the future. He asked Koroliev to accept the group's commitment to work with the Transnistrian side in good faith, and encouraged the start of negotiations on a settlement. Combining confidence-building measures and negotiations was the most effective approach.

5-plus-2 Focus on Confidence-Building Measure

¶11. (C) An OSCE non-paper pointing out five particular confidence-building measures that needed progress formed the basis for the members of the 5-plus-2 discussions on July 23. These were discussed in turn, and in each case the conclusion was that the working groups need to elaborate these issues further. Plans were discussed for writing letters to President Voronin and Mr. Smirnov on removal of a certain number of posts from the security zone and on reopening roads and bridges. The five issues were:

- (1) Removal of unauthorized posts from the Security Zone
- (2) Re-opening of roads and bridges and

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elaboration of mechanisms to prevent seizures of or hindrances to the movement of vehicles/cargoes.

- (3) Economic cooperation between Right Bank and Left Bank companies
- (4) Education
- (5) Individual measures from the CSBM Package elaborated in 2005 by experts from the OSCE, Russian Federation and Ukraine.

¶12. (C) DAS Merkel suggested examining whether the posts were necessary and whether their removal would contribute to greater freedom of movement. The GOM, OSCE, USG and EU supported the idea of a letter calling for reduction of posts, but the Russian representative interjected that the 5+2 was to discuss political issues and lacking that opportunity it was discussing issues outside its direct mandate.

¶13. (C) On the issue of bridges, Yastrebchak suggested this was part of a larger question of opening a transportation corridor. DAS Merkel reminded the group of the EU's 2 million Euro investment in rebuilding the Gura Bicului Bridge, which now stood closed -- opening the bridge was critical for the MCC to proceed with its roads investment. The Ukrainian rep noted that during

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Ohryzko's recent meeting with Smirnov, the Transnistrian leader had agreed to open the bridge, and based upon that understanding Ukraine offered assistance. Sova noted that what was needed was a political decision, and urged the group to appeal to President Voronin and Mr. Smirnov in writing to build confidence by opening the bridge.

¶14. (C) Of the eight working groups initially identified, thus far only three have actually met. Sova suggested introducing new groups to more actively correspond to the technical issues needing discussion. One additional group suggested was an economic group for facilitating trade. While the working groups need political instructions from above, Sova suggested that the sides' political representatives should not be included in technical discussions. Sova said that the Ministry of Reintegration would not attend the working groups and Yastrebchak agreed that likewise, the Transnistrian MFA would not attend.

Comment

¶15. (C) The session was constructive as a step in the right direction that showed indisputable momentum for moving forward to another meeting. Everyone agreed on the positive contribution that can be made by confidence-building measures, but the real challenge remains how to get the issue of political status onto the table. The OSCE's idea of holding a seminar could be a positive way to allow the Transnistrians to talk about elements of an autonomy package in a non-binding, non-threatening format.

¶16. DAS Merkel has cleared on this cable.

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